

EXHIBIT 4

CALIFORNIA LEGACY PROJECT SPOTLIGHT ON CONSERVATION REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY NARRATIVE ON CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

At each of the nine regional workshops, the California Legacy Project facilitated hour-long small group discussions in which workshop attendees – from various interest groups and walks of life – were asked to discuss specific strategies that address local natural resources conservation in the context of local economic concerns.

The results? Spirited group discussions that fostered brainstorming, dialogue, and shared understanding – not consensus – about conservation approaches that are working, could be improved, or should be attempted in regions of the state or in California as a whole.

Lessons learned:

Legacy staff has conducted a preliminary analysis of both the broad categories and specific examples of strategies generated at the Legacy workshops. Among the many specific recommendations, five generalized strategic themes capture comments that were raised repeatedly by workshop participants.

Conserving private working lands is essential to conservation of natural resources and sustenance of local communities.

Participants at every regional workshop suggested approaches to conserving working lands – farms, forests, and rangelands – for their productive economic value as well as for wildlife, natural resource, and open space values. Specific strategies outlined to approach working lands conservation include:

- Improving the use of (and/or augmenting) existing tax incentives for conservation (noted in 9 of 9 regional workshops).
- Enhancing the economic viability of working farms, forests, and rangelands (noted in 4 of 9 regional workshops).
- Increasing regulatory flexibility for private landowners that are carrying out “best management practices” or restoration activities on their properties. (Commonly-expressed examples include: removing regulatory disincentives to conservation – 4 of the 9 regional workshops; permit coordination for conservation – 4 of the 9 regional workshops; and regulatory assurances such as Safe Harbor agreements – 5 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Improving the ability of California landowners to take more advantage of federal funding for wildlife habitat protection and resource conservation on private (working) lands, including federal Farm Bill Conservation Title funds (9 out of 9 workshops).
- Improving and expanding the use of local land use planning and zoning to maintain farm and ranch operations (4 out of 9 regional workshops).

Consideration of the economic implications of resource conservation is especially important in rural areas.

Participants in workshops conducted in California regions with sizable non-urban areas were explicitly asked to suggest strategies that would benefit both the local economy and natural resource concerns. The strategies outlined in these workshops help to frame the question of sustainability in a rural context, and include the following:

- Instituting or increasing job re-training from resource extraction trades to restoration activities (4 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Developing initiatives to promote sustainably-produced farm and forest products such as local branding and other “value-added” market approaches (5 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Supporting ecotourism and agricultural tourism as a way to generate sustainable income and complement landowner income from commodity production (5 of the 9 regional workshops).

“Smart growth” tools can be applied to both protect resources and improve urban livability.

Workshop participants time and again noted that given the tremendous population pressures in the state, growth has the potential to engulf any number of conservation initiatives or community development efforts. Managing or directing growth figured prominently in the strategies outlined at the workshops, including:

- Encouraging infill development to reduce sprawl (6 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Establishing urban growth boundaries (5 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Preserving open space as a tool to direct growth into urban core areas and to improve opportunities to make downtown areas more livable (4 of the 9 regional workshops).

Conservation acquisitions (including both fee and less-than-fee purchases) are an important tool, particularly if those acquisitions can achieve multiple benefits.

For many years, acquisition of ecologically significant properties has been a critical element of the “conservation toolbox.” Feedback at the workshops suggested that acquisition – including less-than-fee title tools such as conservation easements – continues to be an important tool, particularly in those cases where multiple public objectives can be achieved. The following examples capture some of the frequently raised by workshop participants:

- Continuing to use and improve conservation easements as a tool for protecting and maintaining the viability of working lands, as well as a useful tool for cost-effectively maintaining biological diversity, among other things (9 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Continuing to use fee purchases to acquire important conservation lands, particularly when rare species are present (6 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Continuing to use, and increasing the use of, land exchanges to create appropriate conservation and development ownership patterns (5 of the 9 regional workshops).

Data development, compilation, and dissemination are critical components of regional and statewide conservation strategies.

Participants in the regional workshops – because they are very involved in conservation activities in any number of capacities – consistently acknowledged the key role of information, and the importance of communicating information to decision makers, landowners, and the general public. Suggested strategies include:

- Continuing to develop better data, including identifying rare and unique habitats, land ownership, and wildlife habitat corridors (5 of the 9 regional workshops).
- Continuing to develop environmental education programs for the public, landowners, local government officials, and the media (9 of the 9 regional workshops).

Summary

By fostering a region-by-region discussion about conservation strategies, the California Legacy Project workshops tapped into a rich vein of theoretical and applied knowledge of useful tools from those involved in, or impacted by, conservation activities around the state. Most of the approaches that can be used to promote resource sustainability – and many of the tools – are already available. What is required is the exchange of information, the resources, and the will to do what is required to improve conservation investments in California.